

# Preferred Leadership Styles: Mid-career Professionals in the Czech Military

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## Abstract

Adaptability in leadership styles is widely recognized as a fundamental skill for effective leadership. This article outlines the findings of a comprehensive four-year study on leadership styles within the Czech Armed Forces Senior Officers course. The research, which employed the connective leadership model method, involved 222 participants. The results revealed a consistent trend of nearly equal utilization of all leadership styles across the various groups throughout the years under scrutiny. Notably, the less favored styles encompassed competitive and confiding approaches. Furthermore, the study indicated minimal divergence in the leadership styles employed by male and female soldiers.

**KEY WORDS:** *connective leadership, mid-career professionals, leadership skills, leadership styles, military leadership*

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## 1. Introduction

The global and interconnected world poses new challenges and tasks for leaders at all leadership positions and in all spheres of society, including the field of national security and defense. Leadership skills and abilities are required not only from the top management of organizations but also from middle and front-line management [1]. The ability to change leadership styles according to different criteria - the nature of the task, the composition of the work team, etc., with the intention of meeting the set goals in the best and most effective way is considered one of the basic competencies of a good leader [2].

Today, institutions and organizations face increasing demands for leaders who can lead multidisciplinary and transnational teams assembled to accomplish complex tasks and who have the ability to collaborate and connect the different parts of these organizations. These demands require their leaders to be highly flexible in using new ways of working and different leadership styles while adjusting to the particular task, situation, and context [3].

Not even traditional complex hierarchical organizations [4], such as the army and the police, can resist this trend. The implementation of new leadership and management procedures aimed at sharing power and promoting cooperation is desirable in times of rapid technological development and social change. However, it has its limitations due to the nature of security forces consisting predominantly of combat units, where the basic leadership and management style is directive. Even in combat units, it is necessary to have competent personnel who can apply various leadership styles in the everyday operation of organizations. Therefore, mid-career courses were established in the Czech Army to develop and enhance the leadership and communication skills of commanding officers in middle management positions. It is essential for mid-career officers to learn about different leadership styles, identify their own, and recognize the conditions, situations, and contexts under which it is appropriate to use a particular style.

In 2014, the concept of leadership was introduced into the education of Czech military professionals as a separate thematic unit. This was part of the implementation of a competency-based approach to tertiary and career education in the field of military professionals, focusing on soft skills development. The aim of this article is to present the results of a four-year monitoring of leadership styles among participants of the Czech Armed Forces Senior Officers course using the connective leadership method.

## 2. Research Method

*Description of the method:* The Connective Leadership Model (CLM) [3] was developed to address the increasing need for effective leadership in complex organizations. These organizations require leaders who can effectively lead diverse groups that are interdependent and need to collaborate on shared tasks. The model, created by Lipman-Blumen, is based on the premise that the modern world is shaped by “two contradictory forces: interdependence and diversity”, which “demand conflicting behavioral responses” [5]. Therefore, traditional leadership styles, especially authoritarian ones, became less effective or ineffective. The CLM and its instruments help to identify the leadership styles employed at a specific leadership position: unlike other leadership instruments, e.g. the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire [6], the Global Transformational Leadership Scale [7], Leadership Practices Inventory [8], or NEO-PI-R [9], that focus on personal leadership styles and traits in general, CLM and its Achieving Styles Inventory assess the leadership styles used in the context of the task that a leader is to accomplish.

The Connective Leadership Model identifies three main sets of behavioral styles, each of which contains three more specific behavioral strategies that individual leaders use in different contexts. These sets are direct styles (intrinsic, competitive, power), instrumental (personal, social, entrusting), and relational (collaborative, contributory, and vicarious). The direct set refers to individuals who prefer to tackle tasks on their own and prioritize mastery (intrinsic), competition (competitive), and power (power style). Those who focus on group tasks (collaborative), helping others (contributory), and mentoring (vicarious) while achieving their goals emphasize the relational set. The instrumental set is typical of individuals who view themselves (personal), their connections (social) and others (entrusting style) as tools to accomplish mutual goals. The connective leadership model of nine leadership styles thus aims to help leaders identify and develop strategies that may be outside their usual approach.

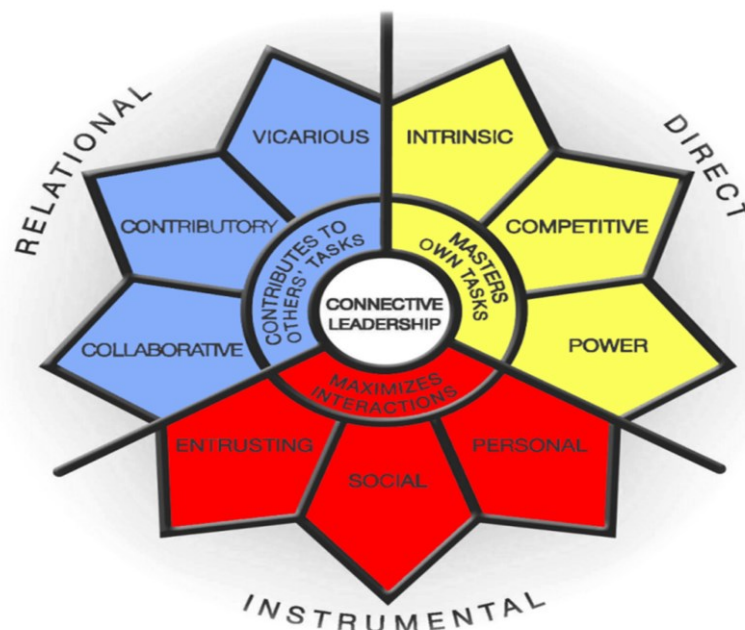


Fig. 1. Connective Leadership Model (Reprinted from reference [10], Copyright Year: 1996, Copyright Owner's Name: Jean Lipman-Blumen, Ph.D.).

The Individual Achieving Styles Inventory (ASI) was utilized to evaluate leadership styles employed in the context of accomplishing work responsibilities. The ASI is a 45-item Likert-type survey designed to identify nine leadership behaviors that individuals typically employ in specific work-related situations. Respondents answer a series of questions to indicate the frequency with which they engage in specified behaviors and receive a score for each of the nine leadership styles, reflecting the frequency of use for each style. While the ASI is available in electronic form in four language variations, a Czech version is not available; therefore, it was administered in English. The administration of the inventory was led by a Connective Leadership Institute Certified Associate.

After completing the inventory, each respondent received a graph, which together with the narrative description, provided their Connective Leadership Profile, identifying the leadership styles that the individual uses most and least frequently. The narrative description outlines the general advantages and drawbacks of each of the most prominent and less prominent styles. Subsequently, individual feedback was provided to each candidate, using coaching questions to guide the respondent to consider possible changes in leadership styles.

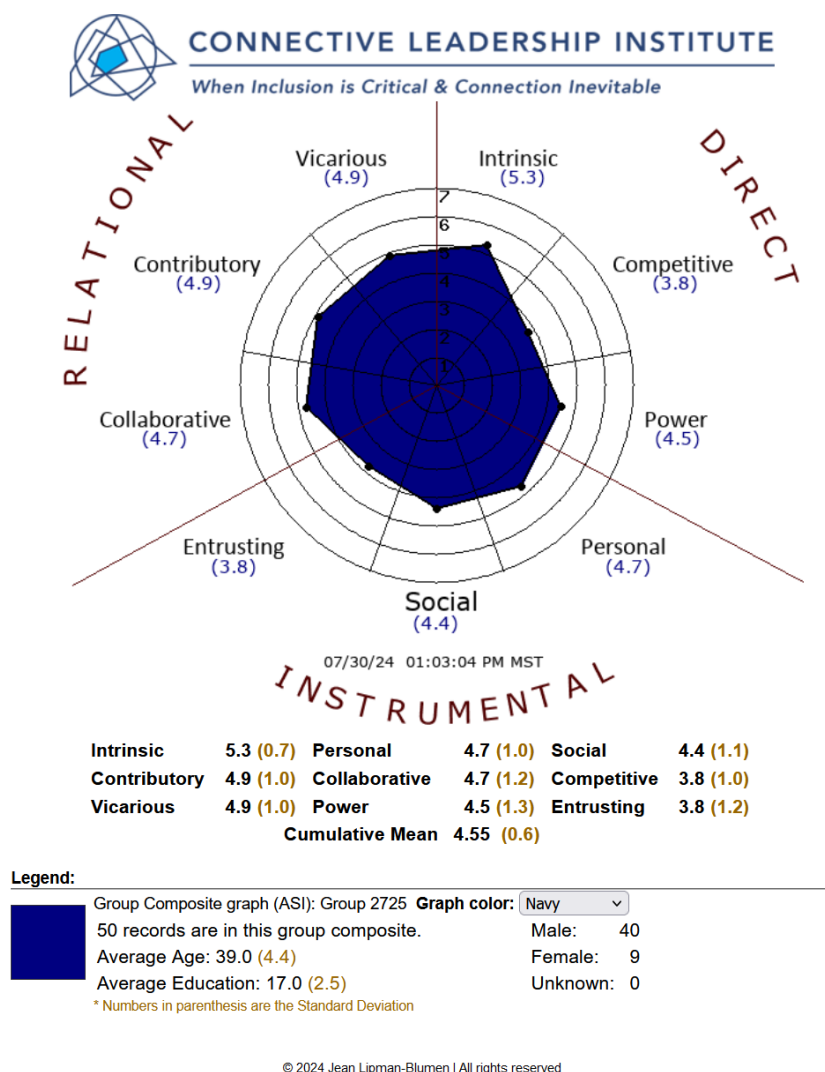


Fig.2 A sub-group results graphs.

*Description of the research:* The research was conducted between 2018 and 2022 as part of the Organizational Leadership Development in Senior Officer Courses. Respondents' participation was completely voluntary; therefore, the research sample selection was entirely random. Both men and women were represented in the respondent pool. All research participants were university graduates with diverse professional backgrounds, holding middle management positions in various departments and facilities under the Ministry of Defence.

A total of 222 mid-level military professionals participated in the 4-year study. These individuals were in the midst of their military careers and had diverse people management experiences. Among the participants, 181 were men, and 41 were women, reflecting the overall representation of men and women in the military profession.

Table 1.

The project target groups

Y	N	M	F	AA
2018	25	17	8	39
2019	100	86	14	39.5
2020	48	38	10	40
2022	49	40	9	39
SUMMARY	222	181	41	39

Y=years, N=number of participants, M=males, F=females, AA=mean age

All research participants received a thorough explanation of the research method and process. Their individual results were anonymized throughout the test and data processing. Each participant was given a unique code to access their results. Only anonymized data was accessible to the researchers for statistical processing.

The results were processed using Excel. Basic statistical methods were employed, including the calculation of mean and standard deviation. The results are presented as total scores for each style, with 0 indicating no preference and 6 indicating the highest preference.

### 3. Findings

The findings, as shown in Fig. 2, Fig. 3, and Fig. 4, indicate a consistent pattern of nearly equal use of all leadership styles across all groups over the years studied. Notably, the less preferred styles included the competitive and entrusting styles. These findings reflect the expectation that at the leadership level, middle rank officers are required to restrain competitive tendencies while collaborating with other teams and groups in order to complete their tasks. Additionally, they are expected to handle many tasks independently, which limits their use of a more (en)trusting leadership style. The findings are congruent with the requirements imposed on military leaders, as stated in Twelve Principles of Modern Military Leadership, where one of the most stressed principles is “there is no I in the team” [11].

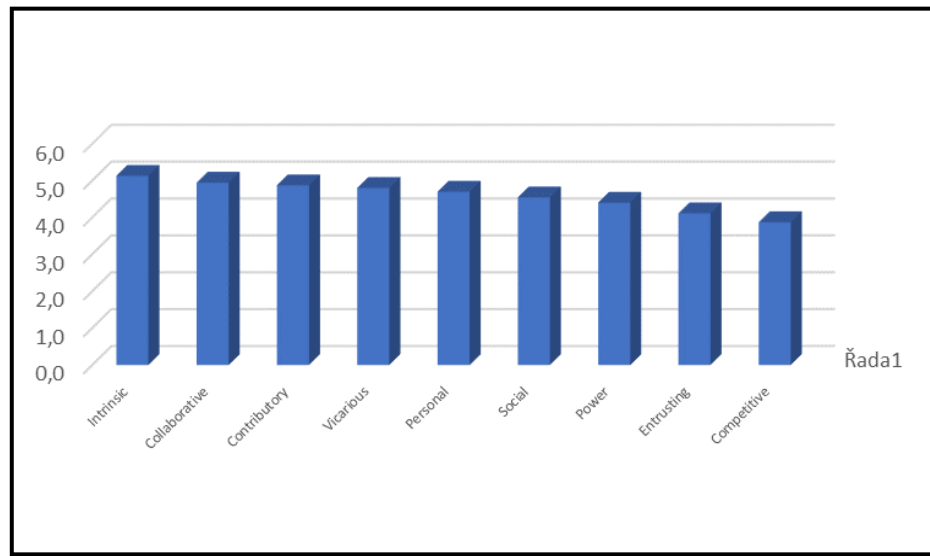


Fig.3 Overall results by preferred styles.

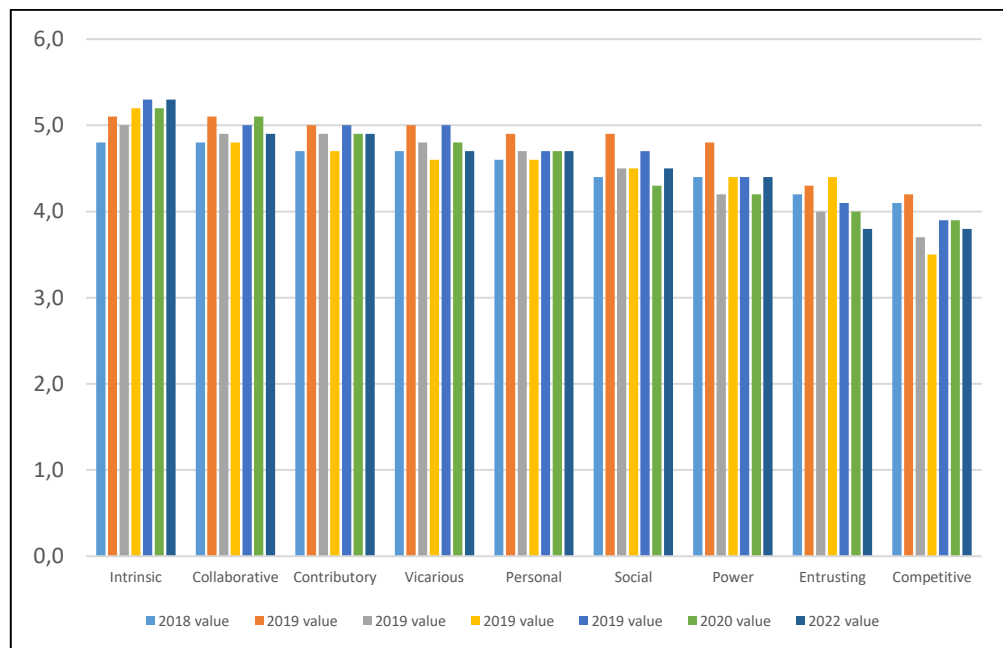


Fig.4 Overall results for the period under review.

As Fig. 5 shows, male and female soldiers do not differ much in the styles they use. The results replicate, with minor variations, the overall results for the whole set. Although the representation of women in the research sample is less than 25%, there is some indication that the environment itself is likely to have a more significant influence on approaches to job tasks in the military environment than the gender-bound personality dispositions of individuals. Again, the findings are in congruence with the findings of the research comparing male and female leadership styles in West Point cadets, where minimal gender differences were found [12].

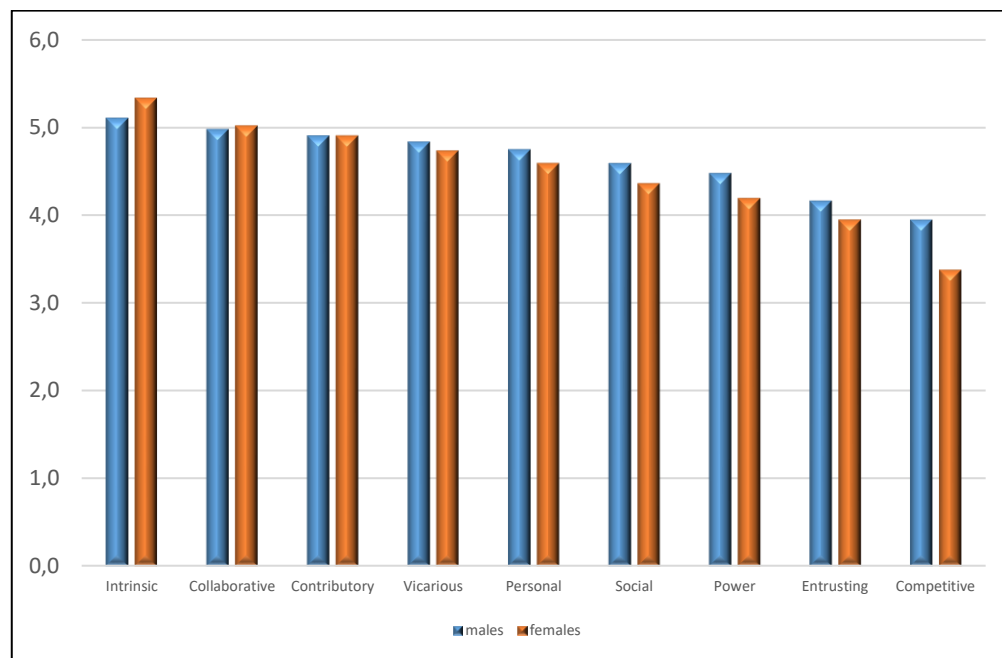


Fig.5. Overall results by gender.

#### 4. Conclusions

Incorporating the internationally proven connective leadership model method into the training of middle management military leaders significantly enhances the training content while helping the participants improve their leadership and communication skills. This approach also allows them to effectively manage challenging situations when leading their teams to accomplish their tasks.

An important finding from long-term work with career education course participants is that mid-career officers recognize the need to improve their leadership skills. They value the feedback provided during the courses and are open to acquiring new knowledge and learning new methods of working with teams. This would enable them to effectively achieve goals even in challenging, non-standard conditions and with team members whose selection they cannot entirely influence.

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Both authors contributed to the project during all phases – including project preparation, data collection, statistics, and writing the article. One of the authors is a person certified to use the ASI questionnaire.

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